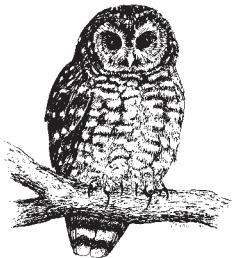




Birds of Saguaro National Park



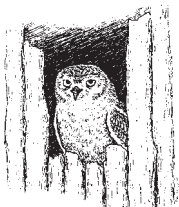
Mexican Spotted Owl

For the Birdwatcher

Whether you are a beginner or a veteran birder, you can find a wondrous variety of birds in Saguaro National Park. From birds that are adapted to the extremes of the desert, to birds that prefer the tall pines of the mountains, over 200 species of birds live in or migrate through the park.

Bird watching in unfamiliar territory can be difficult. To take some of the guesswork out of it, this brochure is provided as a general guide to the birds of Saguaro National Park. Up to date bird lists are available at the visitor centers, as well as staff who can help you plan your birding trip.

Birds of the Desert



Elf Owl

What birds will you find among the cacti of Saguaro National Park? Where can you find them?

The common birds of the desert are greatly varied. From the roadrunner dashing across a trail, to the diminutive verdin gleaning tiny insects from the branch of an acacia, to Harris’ hawks hunting in a family group, birds occupy every niche of the desert scrub habitat.

One of the best ways to find desert birds is by simply getting out there and hiking. Saguaro National Park offers over 75 miles of park trails in desert scrub habitat. Stop frequently to look and listen for birds.

For a less strenuous trip, you might try one of our short, accessible nature trails or a picnic area. Take your bird guide, binoculars and drinking water.

Birds of the Mountains



Golden Eagle

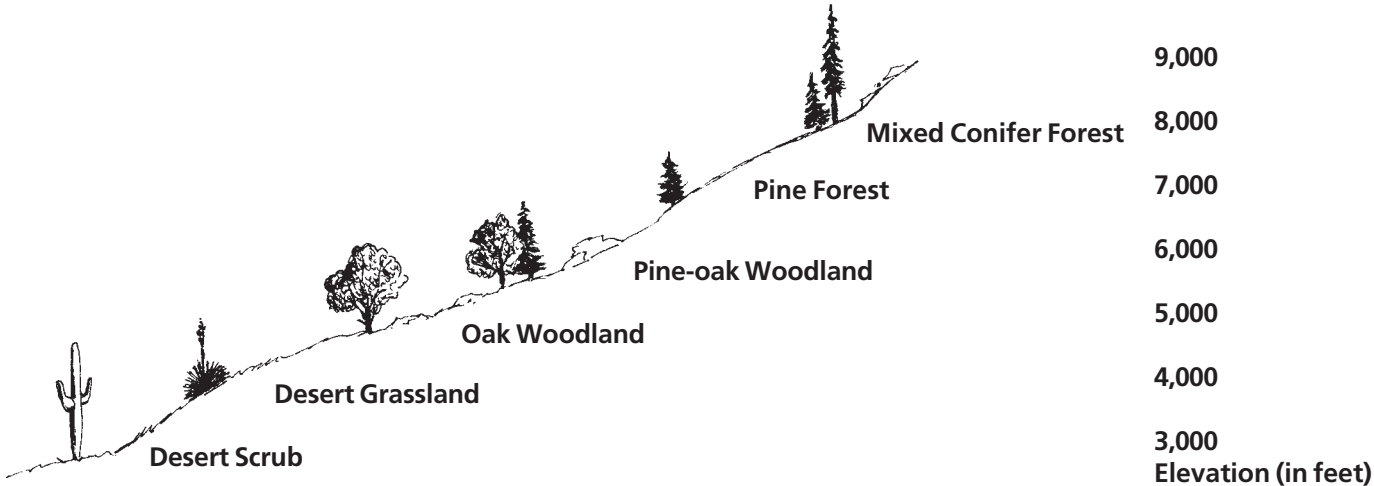
To those who are more adventurous, or simply have more time, a hike into the Saguaro Wilderness Area in the Rincon Mountain District of the park will open new vistas and different habitats.

Birds, such as the red- faced warbler, that are seldom seen on the desert floor, may be found with regularity in the grasslands and the forests of the higher elevations. If camping in a wilderness area appeals to you, ask for information at the visitor center.

In the canyons of the park, you may find the canyon wren. More easily heard than seen, it is distinguished by its tumbling cascade of notes.

The grasslands abound with sparrows, their distinctions often challenging the veteran birder.

High on the mountaintop, peregrine falcons nest among the rocks at Helen’s Dome, while the threatened Mexican spotted owl hunts among the ponderosa pines.



Where to Start



Ash-throated Flycatcher

Rincon Mountain District (east)

1) A moderate 1.8 mile loop hike begins at the Douglas Spring Trailhead. Just east of the sign-in station, turn south on to the Garwood Trail. Watch for activity, particularly on your left, as various sparrows frequent the area. It is also a good place to find the Lucy’s warbler in summer. When you reach the Wentworth Trail, turn right and proceed to the Wildhorse Trail. Follow the Wildhorse Trail north to Speedway Boulevard. Along the way, watch for birds in the washes. Ash-throated and brown-crested flycatchers, Bell’s vireos, rufous-winged sparrows and Crissal thrashers may be found here seasonally. Trail maps are available at the visitor center.

2) On the north end of the Cactus Forest Drive is the paved, quarter-mile Desert Ecology Trail. One can expect to see several species of birds on this wheelchair accessible trail. Look for rufous-winged sparrow and verdins along the wash. Cooper’s hawks are known to frequent the large mesquite trees along the wash as well.

3) Another area to check is the Javelina Picnic Area at the south end of the Cactus Forest Drive. Sit down at one of the ramadas and watch the birds around you, but please don’t feed them. A quarter-mile hike up the Tanque Verde Ridge Trail from here will take you up to a small canyon where you may find the canyon wren or the black-chinned sparrow.

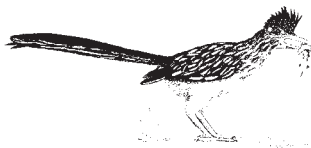
Tucson Mountain District (west)

1) The visitor center at the Tucson Mountain District offers a surprising number of birding opportunities. Visitors often see ash-throated flycatchers and Say’s phoebes hunting insects off the back patio. Cactus wrens and curve-billed thrashers often feed around the building. A short stroll in the cactus garden might reveal a gilded flicker or Gila woodpecker among the saguaros.

2) Another excellent birding area starts at the King Canyon Trailhead. As you begin your hike, watch for pyrrhuloxias and phainopeplas along the wash to your left. Continue on to the intersection of Sendero Esperanza and turn to your left. The grassy arroyo below Mam-a-gah picnic area is an excellent place to look for canyon towhees and black-throated sparrows. To complete this 2.4 mile loop hike, return to the parking lot via the Gould mine trail. For additional birding opportunities, continue up to Wasson Peak via the King Canyon and Hugh Norris Trails. For a 7.5 mile loop, return to the trailhead via the Hugh Norris, Sendero Esperanza and Gould Mine Trails.

3) The Bajada Loop Road is a six-mile, graded, unpaved road that will give you the feeling of being deep in a desert wilderness. Watch for the very social Harris’ hawks along the drive. Secretive rock wrens and verdins may be seen along the hillsides and washes. Look for Gambel’s quail along the road.

A Little Quiz



Roadrunner

1) Which birds are the architects of the saguaro boot?

\_\_\_\_\_

2) Which black bird spreads the seeds of desert mistletoe?

\_\_\_\_\_

3) Which bird builds a football-shaped nest in cholla cactus?

\_\_\_\_\_

4) What tiny, nocturnal hunter lives in saguaro cavities?

\_\_\_\_\_

5) Which cardinal look-alike has a crest and yellow bill?

\_\_\_\_\_

6) Which small yellow-headed bird builds ball-shaped nests?

\_\_\_\_\_

Answers: 1) Gila woodpeckers and gilded flickers 2) phainopepla 3) cactus wren 4) elf owl 5) pyrrhuloxia 6) verdin